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## THE SCHOOL PHASES OF VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

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The need for such guidance as will enable youthful workers to adjust themselves to the complex and rapidly changing economic conditions of our times is clearly recognized by all thoughtful and interested people. It is not quite so clear, however, where the duty of the school begins or terminates in assisting in such adjustment.

Medical inspection, as it has been developed in public-school systems during the last decade, offers an excellent parallel. When reasonably hygienic conditions have been provided and when the school nurse or the school physician has diagnosed the individual case and has referred it to the private doctor or to the free dispensary for treatment, the school is considered by many to have done its full duty. In the same way the public school may be considered as only partially responsible for the necessary vocational guidance, the contributing agencies being the free public employment office or the private vocation bureau.

Similarly there should be a logical division of responsibility on an age basis, the adult of thirty presenting a problem which the public school, or at least the public secondary school, need not consider. The school may properly be required to interest itself in the earlier vocational experiences of the youth of the community without committing itself to the duty of supervising occupational adjustments throughout the vicissitudes of a long and constantly changing economic life. In other words, providing for a "start in life" may become a school function without requiring the public school to exercise a lifelong "guidance."

In developing a program for vocational guidance, therefore, we must distinguish clearly between the immediate and the ultimate purpose, and must realize that the former is the more pertinent and that the "next step" is the most important consideration. A common criticism of our school system in general has been that its aims

are too remote, both in time and in place, to fix the attention and hold the interest of most of the pupils. To follow such a precedent in inaugurating a system of vocational guidance will be fatal to the success of the movement.

Since vocational guidance has to do with "the start in life," and since it necessitates an articulation between the school and occupations, the time at which it may be exercised most intelligently is that at which the pupil leaves school. Vocational guidance, therefore, as a school function, may be classified roughly to correspond to three major groups of pupils.

First, there is the group which leaves school at the termination of the compulsory age limit with about an eighth-grade training, perhaps a little more or a little less. While individual differences in the capacities, ambitions, and opportunities of the members of this group will result in widely differing success in later life, in the main the early occupational needs of the several members of the group are identical and the same method of exercising vocational guidance is proper for all. This method may be designated as "Employment Supervision." It may be said in passing that this method requires, for its highest efficiency, a system of compulsory continuation schools.

Second, there is the group of pupils who will spend from two to four years in the high school (senior), but who are not contemplating a college career. Again, while individual differences will ultimately distribute the members of this group widely, their need for vocational guidance which the school can meet most effectually is the immediate one, and the method which is the most appropriate for meeting it may be termed "Vocational Information and Placement." In passing, it may be said that the value of such vocational information and placement will be enhanced many fold by high-school courses of instruction with a vocational content, though some guidance may be given without intensive vocational courses.

Third, there is the group which is clearly on its way to higher educational institutions. The primary duty of the secondary school to this group, so far as vocational guidance is concerned, may be designated by the term "Educational Guidance."

Judging from some excellent experimental work which has been done with the first group, there would seem to be no good reason why educational authorities should not assume a degree of responsibility for young people up to sixteen or eighteen years of age, even if they have severed their connection with the regular public school. In fact, there are many excellent reasons why, for the sake of society as well as for the sake of the children, even more careful and more solicitous care should be given to such children because they have entered upon the exacting duties of occupational life. That children are at work is no reason why they do not need education, though they require a different kind of education from that which is possible in the regular school. It is of prime importance that they be so guided as to get all possible education out of their daily occupation, which they are not likely to do unless carefully and intelligently supervised by the educational authorities.

It is futile to talk about the value of the life-career motive in the guidance of this group, for most will have to be contented with "jobs" for many years, and perhaps may never enter upon a genuine "career," or "vocation." Whatever may be possible in the way of advancement for individual members of this group, the vast majority will constitute the rank and file of the industrial army, and their greatest success and happiness depends upon their ability to understand their condition and to make the most of the opportunities which it presents for work and for leisure. How can this best be accomplished?

Careful study of the occupations of the children of this group invariably reveals the fact that there must of necessity be considerable migration from job to job. While, from the point of view of the employer, this migration is wholly bad, from the point of view of the individual there are educational possibilities in such variety of occupation, and this possibility will be greatly enhanced when the school authorities are in a position to control the changes to some extent, to advise against undue and unnecessary "job hoboism," and to counsel the individual whenever a change is made.

In all this there is recognition of the fact that all education is not obtained in the school, but that the education which one gets

from his daily toil may be greatly enhanced if the school authorities assume the responsibility of guiding and counseling young workers.

Referring again in this connection to the continuation school, it should be said that it is possible to maintain continuation schools without exercising employment supervision, as described above, and conversely it is possible to exercise vocational supervision without establishing compulsory continuation schools. For securing the greatest return from either vocational supervision or the continuation school, however, it is imperative that the two be linked, and it is preferable that they be administered by the same school official.

It should also be said that the establishment of prevocational classes or of the junior high school will greatly reduce the need of this form of guidance, since many more pupils will be held in school thereby and will thus be brought into the second group.

Perhaps the most important phase of vocational guidance, as far as the secondary school is concerned, is that which is peculiarly appropriate for the second group and which was designated above as "Vocational Information and Placement." Several interesting experiments have been made in the smaller high schools, which demonstrate beyond the shadow of a doubt that it is possible so to collect and to impart such information about vocations in general, and to show the connection between these vocations and the various subjects of instruction in the high-school curriculum, as to cause the whole high-school situation to take on a new aspect to the pupils and to the teachers as well.

For purposes of vocational information the formal, traditional, academic courses are vitalized by reference to vocational work, and even the courses in handwork receive a new impulse. New courses are organized to inform the pupils regarding the nature, requirements, and rewards of various occupations, the personal characteristics and specific training which will render one most likely to achieve success in them, and the opportunities for those thus trained which the local and the more distant fields offer. Such courses include elements of history, economics, and sociology, and are more genuinely "cultural" than much of the school work which is justified mainly on that ground. An excellent example of this

type of vocational guidance was described in an article by D. W. Horton in the *School Review* (April, 1915).

The foregoing would seem to indicate that there is much material pertinent to vocational guidance which may be collected, and that the great need is for its co-ordination and its adaptation to the requirements of different groups of pupils. Such co-ordination must be worked out through experience with children in order to test the efficiency of the plan and to prove that the information given has real guiding power. All this will require time and intelligent patience, but any beginning, however crude, will be of great value to the cause.

For a general discussion of this question of giving vocational information to high-school pupils, and for some specific examples of such information, the following references will be found useful:

- Davis, *Vocational and Moral Guidance*, Ginn & Co.  
Bloomfield, *Youth, School and Vocation*, Houghton Mifflin Co.  
Parsons, *Choosing a Vocation*, Houghton Mifflin Co.  
Weaver, *Profitable Vocations for Boys*, A. S. Barnes Co.  
Weaver, *Profitable Vocations for Girls*, A. S. Barnes Co.  
Tolman, *Hygiene for the Worker*, American Book Co.  
William DeWitt Hyde, Editor, *Vocations*, 10 vols., Hall & Locke Co.  
*Thirteenth Census of the United States*: Abstract.

To achieve the fullest measure of success for any plan of vocational guidance for the group under discussion some provision for placement must be made.

In the larger cities this may possibly be accomplished most effectively by co-operating with established agencies, such as the public employment office, if one exists in the community, or with the Employment Department of the Y.M.C.A. or the Y.W.C.A. In Boston a Placement Bureau, established by agencies outside of the school, is doing effective work with public-school children. The Bureau is officially recognized by the School Committee, and a thorough system of blank forms for registration and reports is used by all the schools in their dealings with the Bureau.

There is no reason, however, why such a bureau should not be developed gradually in any school system. There has been a rapid development of this idea during the past two or three years, and

doubtless the placement bureau, at least in embryo, could be found in many schools. Several different plans have been worked out, two of which will be mentioned here.

The school system of Lincoln, Nebraska, has established an "Efficiency List," which is open to the inspection of the employers of that city. Enrolment on this list is not gained by scholarship alone, but by demonstrating that one possesses certain personal characteristics which are necessary for success in vocational life. While the characteristics which are now being noted are of a rather general nature, undoubtedly experience in operating the scheme will develop the desirability of recording special qualifications for particular occupations. In any event, half the object will be accomplished when the business men of Lincoln form the habit of consulting this "Efficiency List" and the school authorities when in need of young employees. This articulation of school and business is sure to develop any plan of this nature to the point of efficiency.

Another feature of the school placement plan is finely illustrated by a recent development in the public schools of Rochester, New York, which is described in the following quotations from a circular of information entitled "Co-operation between Employers and Schools."

At present the laws of most of our states are so faulty that boys and girls under sixteen years of age may drop out of school for the purpose of going to work and then remain in idleness for months. Only a very few states require their youths to be either in school or at work.

Not long ago the superintendent of an eastern trade school inserted the following advertisement in one issue of a daily paper:

WANTED—Boys and girls out of work to take  
courses in the TRADE SCHOOL UNTIL POSITIONS  
are secured for them.

One such insertion brought nearly a score of young people to the school. Positions for some of them were found in a month, others who were not under economic pressure became interested in the school work and completed a year's course.

During this year of business depression the waste of time through idleness has been greatly increased.

In an attempt to remedy this situation two hundred letters (similar to the following) were sent to employers of Rochester, asking their co-operation in keeping children in school:

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING, ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

HERBERT S. WEET	SUPERINTENDENT
ALFRED P. FLETCHER	ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT
JOSEPH P. O'HERN	ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Yawman & Erbe Mfg. Co.,  
424 St. Paul Street,  
C I T Y.

Gentlemen:-

At the present time scores of boys and girls under eighteen years of age are walking the streets looking for work. They might better be in school. Many might be induced to return to school if they thought that they would not lose the chance of a position. The co-operation of the employers of Rochester is needed to get them to return. Would you be willing when in need of young workers (under eighteen) to telephone this fact to the Board of Education office and allow us to send one or more applicants to you?

If we could be assured of this co-operation we would urge boys and girls to take up courses in our Vocational Schools until positions were open to them.

Any consideration you may give this matter will be genuinely appreciated.

Yours very truly,

ALFRED P. FLETCHER

P. S.....Would you be willing to give out cards like the enclosed (cards to be furnished by us with your name imprinted) to young persons applying to you for positions?

January  
Twenty-one,  
1 9 1 5.



The following reply is typical of scores of letters that have been received:

**YAWMAN AND ERBE MFG. CO.**

**Makers of Filing Systems**

**ROCHESTER, N. Y.**

Department of Public Instruction,  
Attention of Alfred P. Fletcher,  
Assistant Superintendent,  
C I T Y.

Dear Sir:-

We think the action you have taken to prevail upon the young boys and girls under eighteen years of age to remain in school and endeavor to secure positions for them is indeed commendable, and we shall be very glad to co-operate with you.

If you will send down a supply of the cards, just as the form enclosed, we shall be very glad to hand them out to young persons applying for positions.

Very truly yours,

YAWMAN & ERBE MFG. CO.

Edward Weter  
Manager General Offices.

January  
Twenty-five,  
1915.

A large number of employers promised to hand out cards like the following:

**A**T the present time this firm is only employing workers (under eighteen years of age) recommended by the Department of Public Instruction. If you desire a position we would suggest that you communicate with **Raymond C. Keople, 308 Municipal Building.**

Hours 9 to 10 A.M. and 4:30 to 5:30 P.M.

**YAWMAN & ERBE MFG. CO.**

Seventy-seven boys and girls who had left school never expecting to return have been induced to re-enter school. Many of them were unwilling to return if they were to be given any book subjects. These pupils were given trade work that would fit them for some position. The girls were also taught those subjects that would help them to improve their home conditions. Gradually becoming interested in the school work, they have been induced to take up English and arithmetic.

Following is the record sent in by the teacher of one of the classes: 40 girls enrolled (during six months); 3 lost; 26 placed in positions; 11 remaining.

This simple experiment has been worth while. It seems to point to a time when boys and girls will know that the surest way to get a good position is to remain in school. When this time arrives the figures on "elimination" will be less formidable than they are today.

For the third group, namely, those who are to have an extended education reaching into the college or university, placement is, of course, entirely inappropriate for the high school. The vocational guidance needed here is the giving of information regarding the several professions, the opportunities which they offer, the extent and nature of the preparation demanded, the financial resources

needed for this preparation and for the lean years of early professional service, and the various educational institutions where preparation can be secured together with the requirements and advantages of each.

In addition to this information, as outlined above, vocational guidance for this group may well include a study of the personal characteristics of the students. For this purpose it is probable that psychological tests will ultimately be of some value. It must be confessed that, thus far, the results have been meager, and that, in the nature of the case, they will always be useful only within rather narrow limits. The most that can be expected of the psychological test for vocational guidance, in the secondary school, is the discovery of tendencies which are marked to an extraordinary degree—special aptitudes or disabilities. In the vast majority of school children ability to improve under training, to adapt one's self to the environment, is more marked than special aptitudes, so that geographic, social, economic, and educational conditions are more effective in revealing one's vocational opportunities than the most elaborate system of psychological tests. Nevertheless, wherever such tests can be made and interpreted intelligently, they should be employed, for they will help in preventing some of the unnecessary and wasteful stumbling and indirection which at present mark the college careers of so many youths.

And finally it should be said that the most convincing arguments in favor of vocational guidance are the numerous, if not extensive, plans which have been put into operation experimentally during the past five years. These have generally been worked out by progressive conservatives in education who have seen the great need and have tried to meet it. These educators have proceeded on the assumption that vocational guidance is not a new function of education but rather an old function which needs liberal extension, and they affirm, with practical unanimity, that nothing has come into the school system within a generation which has contributed to its educational efficiency in such large measure as has the organization of a system of vocational guidance.